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Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (1979-1992): Correspondence 16

Bess Lomax Hawes

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August 9, 1963

Ms. Christina A. White
Executive Director
Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
512 Wickenden Street
Providence, RI 02903-4464

Dear Christina:

I must first apologize for delaying this letter so long. I returned from Rhode Island to face a marathon -- 4½ day-long -- National Council meeting and the inevitable pile-up of work that accumulates during such an absence.

Next I want to thank you officially for your cordial hospitality during my recent visit to Rhode Island and for arranging the interesting discussion with Representatives Frederick Williamson, Vito Saritelli, and Charles Walton. I learned a lot during my fleeting visit and enjoyed myself as well. I do hope I can come again soon for a somewhat more relaxed stay.

Now I must regretfully turn to a less pleasant matter. I was deeply concerned to hear that the salary allotted in the Folk Arts 1962 grant (22-5936-197) for the Rhode Island Folk Arts Coordinator had once again not been paid in full. During the previous first year of this project, before your appointment as director, the same thing had happened, but this office was assured that it was a bookkeeping and recording-keeping confusion and that matters would be more appropriately managed in future.

As a federal officer, I am responsible for the proper expenditure of those federal dollars that have been allocated to the Folk Arts Program. These expenditures go out as grants for which detailed budgets have been submitted by the applying organization. Our office, the Folk Arts reviewing panel, and the NEA grants office all scrutinize grant budgets carefully before recommending them to the National Council on the Arts and finally to the Chairman of the Endowment. They thus represent an agreement between the applying organization and the federal government, and it is obviously improper for one or another of the parties concerned to change the terms of that understanding without either notification or negotiation.

Shifting Folk Arts grants moneys between budget lines requires approval by this office. Occasionally, in the case of major shifts, I even take the request to our advisory panel for additional review, and I always submit them to our grants office

for final approval. The Endowment takes its responsibilities for the correct and legal distribution of tax moneys with the utmost seriousness, and most of our applicant organizations do too.

Now, in connection with the 1982 grant, the year is almost past. I should like to have an accounting of how those funds have been expended, most particularly what disposition has been made of the funds earmarked for but not paid to the Folk Arts Coordinator. This accounting need not be in the form of an official audit -- an explanatory letter might well cover the problem, but we must have this record cleared by the end of the granting period.

Next, in connection with your current application for 1983-4, I am happy to tell you that it has been favorably recommended both by the Folk Arts panel and by the National Council on the Arts. Both this office and our reviewing panel have been greatly impressed by the fine work done by your Coordinator, Dr. Winifred Lambrecht, and we appreciate the support of the Rhode Island Council for the Arts for her activities throughout your state. However, the issue of her appropriate salary plainly must be settled before the new grant goes into effect. I am enclosing for your interest a number of recent public notices advertising state folk arts coordinator positions across the country. You will find that a \$20,000 salary is not out of line with other salaries offered by other states, and my own personal view, as I told you during our Providence meeting, is that Dr. Lambrecht's experience and qualifications make her one of the outstanding professionals in the field.

Until we receive some assurance that the budget figures submitted in your current grant will be adhered to or until we can negotiate a new budget, I have asked our Grants Office not to mail out the current grant. I am sure this will not inhibit your program or activities in any way, since we would not normally send this grant out before October 1 under most circumstances and your renewal start date is not until February 2, 1984. I take this action regretfully and intend it only as a signal of our very serious concern over the current state of affairs. Surely this issue can be resolved within a few weeks. In the meantime, please accept again my most earnest hopes that we can continue to sponsor in partnership the Rhode Island folk arts program, through which so much fine work has been accomplished in such a short time.

Yours very sincerely,

Bess Lomax Hawes
Director
Folk Arts Program

Enclosures